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ABSTRACT

This packet of materials, which draws on findings from research conducted by the Scottish Council for Research in Education, is designed to help Scottish teachers improve discipline in the primary school and classroom. The packet contains three booklets: (1) "Action on Discipline throughout the School," which concentrates on promoting effective discipline in the whole-school context and contains materials on policy review and development; (2) "Scenarios," which contains five scenarios based on everyday classroom situations; and (3) "Action on Discipline in the Classroom," which focuses on analyzing and improving discipline in the day-to-day work of the classroom. The first booklet contains action-on-policy papers, which offer practical tasks to improve discipline, and information sheets that list resources and references. (LMI)

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ACTION ON DISCIPLINE

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In the Primary Classroom

Pamela Munn
Margaret Johnstone
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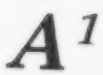
HOW TO USE THE DISCIPLINE PACK

This booklet is part of a pack which aims to support schools' work in the important area of discipline. The pack contains two booklets. One (this booklet) concentrates on classroom discipline. The other (*Action on Discipline: Throughout the Primary School*) focuses on discipline in the whole school. These booklets draw on key findings from SCRE research on discipline — research on the day-to-day realities of school life, to help schools improve discipline. The focus is on understanding what makes for effective discipline.

There are three symbols used to identify the three different kinds of support material for the booklets.



Action on Policy Papers: There are five of these. They suggest practical tasks which can help improve discipline. They emphasise the need to go beyond paper policy to active commitment and implementation of agreed changes in discipline practice.
They can be used to:

- help the school analyse its current discipline message
- involve the whole school community in improving discipline.

Information Sheets: There are three of these at the back of *Action on Discipline: Throughout the Primary School.* They list some discipline resource packs for schools and offer a brief description of them. They also list some major books and articles on discipline.

Scenarios: There are five of these. They present descriptions of every-day classroom events. They are intended as a stimulus for discussion about teachers' classroom practice and about whole school discipline. No right answers are given. Teachers can use these scenarios to:

- consider their own ideas about what makes for effective discipline
- analyse the connections between discipline in their classrooms, subject departments and the school as a whole.

ACTION ON DISCIPLINE

In the Primary Classroom

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Scottish Office Education Department
Scottish Council for Research in Education

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THE RESEARCH

The ideas and information in this support pack are based on the findings of research into discipline in Scottish schools carried out over a three-year period by the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The research reports are listed on page 18 of *Action on Discipline: Throughout the Primary School.*

The examples and quotations used in the text are from real schools and teachers. Any names used are fictitious.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This pack would not have been possible without the help and support of a great many people. The teachers and pupils in schools who took part in SCRE research on discipline provided the foundation of the pack. It was refined and developed by the constructive criticism of members of an Advisory Committee and by teachers and parents who commented on the materials at a draft stage. The Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) commissioned the research and the development of the pack and we are grateful for its support.

Final responsibility for the content lies with the authors. The views represented here are not necessarily those of SCRE or of SOED.

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1

GETTING STARTED

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet focuses on classroom discipline. It uses findings from SCRE research to pinpoint the key factors contributing to effective discipline.

The booklet does not offer recipes for effective discipline. If such a recipe existed it would have been discovered by now! It provides a framework which helps teachers develop their analytical skills when dealing with discipline issues. The booklet provides ideas about how to:

- review your discipline strategies and their outcomes
- reflect on discipline in your classroom
- review the conditions which influence discipline in your classroom.

The booklet can be used to reflect on discipline success or failures:

- as a stimulus for discussion among experienced staff
- with student teachers
- with probationers
- with the whole-school booklet to show connections between whole-school policy and classroom practice.

STRUCTURE

The booklet contains seven short chapters of which this is the first. Chapter 2 sets out the case for teachers analysing their classroom practice. Chapters 3–5 highlight particular features of practice to focus on:

- actions
- the classroom context, especially expectations about pupils
- goals.

Each of these suggests practical activities for teachers to heighten awareness of their classroom practice. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 draw the previous sections together to present a framework for understanding classroom discipline.

FINDING THE TIME

Teachers have many competing demands on their time and finding time for what might seem to be 'yet another initiative' could be difficult. Yet it is hard to imagine what could be more important than schools being happy and purposeful learning environments. Discipline is a key ingredient in such an environment. This booklet could be used:

- as part of planned in-service
- during mentoring time with students
- by pairs of teachers working together to help each other through discussion of the results of their analysis of classroom practice.

2

YOUR HIDDEN STRENGTHS

Teachers have a fund of skills, expertise and knowledge about classroom discipline. They rarely make it explicit. Yet it is their greatest asset in promoting discipline.

Teachers are not in the habit of analysing how their skills work. They often have difficulty in talking about what is, for them, familiar and ordinary practice. They can find it difficult to explain to themselves, and to colleagues such as probationers or student teachers, why and how actions are effective.

Thinking about what works for you, why it works and how it promotes effective discipline lets you build on your successes. This type of reflection allows you to maintain your skills and develop new ones in a more focused way. Knowing when to use a particular technique and being conscious of why it works helps to maximise your chances of success.

WHY SHOULD TEACHERS ANALYSE CLASSROOM PRACTICE?

It is not easy to give an account of what you do spontaneously, in the heat of the moment, or what you do routinely. This is how people act when they are busy getting on with the job. Unfortunately, there are costs in not being explicit about classroom practice. These are:

- ***Bad practice can persist***

  It is difficult to build on good practice and eliminate bad practice. Strengths and weaknesses in promoting effective classroom discipline are most visible when we are surprised by the out of the ordinary. Most of the time we are not aware of the knowledge and skills we use to maintain discipline. When we are aware of it, it is often a very fleeting awareness which fades away, we forget the details of the action.

- ***Inappropriate actions***

  When there is a discipline problem, not having access to a pool of explicit knowledge can slow down a response to the situation. This may force teachers to repeat their mistakes rather than learn from them and to try inappropriate strategies that from the outset may have little chance of success.

- ***Minimises skills and knowledge***

  It can be difficult to pass on knowledge about effective discipline to probationers and students. This leaves them open to the view that the right personality is everything and that the good teacher succeeds by magic, not hard work. Teachers tend to underplay the thinking and judgement they apply to classroom discipline because so much is routine and taken for granted.

- ***Restricts learning opportunities***

  One final cost of tacit knowledge is that it reduces the opportunity of learning from others. It discourages sharing experiences of success and portrays teaching as a private rather than a collaborative activity.

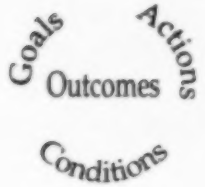
One student teacher sums up some of the costs of not talking about classroom practice. Her first teaching practice was terrible:

> *"I don't mind admitting it now, but that first teaching practice was terrible. I watched what the teacher did, but when I tried it, it just didn't work. They wouldn't settle down, and I couldn't get the groups to work independently and quietly at all. I talked to Eric about it — the class teacher — but all he said was that the class knew him and didn't know me. He said it'll come with experience — but I didn't know what to do! When I did what he did the class ignored me."*

Skilled teachers can make effective discipline look easy. They often know more about their strategies and actions than they can say and they find it easier to communicate through actions rather than words. Their difficulty in making their knowledge explicit can be frustrating for less skilled colleagues or for student teachers who wish to learn from them. Both skilled teachers and teachers with difficulties need to develop ways of thinking about what they do. Even experienced teachers can meet difficult classes. Even in a well-motivated, happy class, there can be individual pupils who pose discipline problems for the teacher. A group of experienced teachers, sharing their knowledge about classroom practice can be of immense benefit to each other as well as to inexperienced colleagues.

Chapters 3–5 suggest how you can make your knowledge explicit by analysing the steps towards good discipline. The three chapters focus on the three elements of good discipline:

- actions
- conditions
- goals.



In each section, practical activities are suggested. Chapter 6 then looks at outcomes and how you can build on what happens in your classroom. Analysing outcomes by looking at actions, conditions and goals will give you a framework for understanding classroom discipline. Chapter 7 suggests a basic exercise to strengthen awareness of how your actions, goals and classroom conditions affect each other.

3

ANALYSING ACTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Your first steps towards more effective classroom discipline will be to look at what you do with a class or a group to promote discipline. Given that it is never easy to visualise yourself in action, it may be helpful to think about two kinds of actions that you take:

- advance planning and preparation
- reacting to classroom events.

ADVANCE PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Our research revealed that teachers who controlled classes well minimised opportunities for disruption. They did this by:

- planning learning activities carefully
- making connections with previous work
- being in class before the pupils arrived
- ensuring equipment or materials needed were available and in working order
- having well established routines for activities, for example, the collection and return of materials
- establishing positive relationships with pupils, knowing their interests and often family background.

These teachers prepared things in advance. They did not wait for something to happen before taking action. They also anticipated possibilities of disruption. They either nipped problems in the bud or made it clear what was expected.

REACTING TO EVENTS

Other kinds of actions are triggered by a sign that all is not well. These signs might be pupils talking out of turn or pupils not getting on with set tasks. These responding kind of actions are reactions. The teachers respond to a cue that trouble might be brewing. Reactions included:

- warnings
- verbal rebukes
- standing beside a pupil
- using humour to defuse a situation
- explaining/helping
- moving a pupil
- sending a pupil to a higher authority
- involving parents.

The particular actions and reactions used varied. Much depended on individual circumstances. What was interesting was that teachers reported more actions concerning advance planning and preparation than reactions. When reporting reactions to possible trouble, explaining and helping featured prominently. Of

course, teachers also used warnings, or shouted or tried a range of other strategies in relation to signs of trouble. But it is worth emphasising the dividends paid by advance planning.

QUALITY PLANNING

One of the most important steps to take towards more effective discipline is to prepare things in advance. Experienced teachers have a repertoire of activities and sequencing in their heads which they have built up over the years. New teachers do not. This is why their planning has to be more explicit and painstaking than that of their experienced colleagues. However, the quality of planning is vital. How do teachers know their plans are going to work? This is where the following are important:

- **knowing the pupils;** what will interest and motivate them
- **clear command of the topic;** knowing what is to be taught
- **access to resources;** so that variety of approaches are encouraged
- **familiarity with resources;** knowing that they are relevant to the task in hand.

Pupils in the schools in the research were well able to describe some of the things their teachers did to get them to work well. Planning and prèparation featured although pupils usually commented in terms of interest and excitement, as below:

> *"My teacher brings in different things to show us and lets us touch them. There are snails and worms in the classroom at the moment. Last term there were crofters' clothes."*

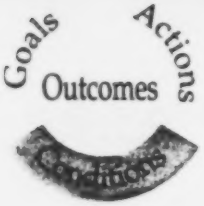
An infant teacher stressed how important advance planning is for her:

> *"I have to be prepared. I have to have the tracing paper out and ready in the pile; all the maths books have to be ready... and the same with the group who are going to be working with the money. ...And I also had the group with the cubes ready to start. ...I find if I don't give materials out initially, then they all come and mill around and they'll interrupt the group you're teaching."*

Analysing the quality of planning, relating it to the classroom conditions and goals is important. Keep your answers to the questions below and use them as a starting point for analysing your planning. *Scenarios 1–5* are starting points too.

ANALYSING YOUR OWN PRACTICE

- ☐ Identify a group of pupils which you like teaching and where you experience few problems. Think about your last contact with that group. Jot down what you did to get them to work well.
- ☐ How many things would you categorise as advance planning?
- ☐ How many things would you categorise as reacting to events?
- ☐ Why were your actions effective with this group? Think about your knowledge of the pupils, and the composition of the group. How did you take these into account when you planned your teaching?



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WEIGHING UP THE CONTEXT

The context in which teachers teach greatly affects their actions and the outcomes of actions taken to promote or maintain effective discipline. What works for you today may not work tomorrow. Common sense suggests that you do not lose your skills overnight but often you will find yourself blaming your lack of preparation or your level of enthusiasm. Equally you may blame the pupils — 'they just won't concentrate'. You blame the conditions, the context.

Conditions in the classroom affect discipline. But when you become aware of the influence of conditions, which conditions do you try to change? Which conditions *can* you change? Friday afternoon will always be Friday afternoon and the infants will be the infants for the whole school year.

Searching for conditions to change is pointless. There may be no 'right' conditions to alter in order to improve discipline. Indeed you are likely to find conditions which you cannot change and this may stop you trying to do anything. The important thing is to be aware of the conditions which you regularly take account of and allow for when teaching. Effective discipline will depend on your weighing up of these conditions and how you take them into account when you select your actions.

Here are some conditions which teachers said had a significant effect on teaching and discipline. The conditions were:

- Knowledge of the class
- Knowledge of an individual pupil
- Previous warnings to pupils
- General working conditions; such as the room, equipment, other resources
- Beliefs about teaching or about children; such as that it is wrong to be sarcastic
- The nature of the topic or curriculum area
- Time; for example, Friday afternoon, Monday morning
- The teacher's feelings; for example, being in a good mood, feeling tired
- Class size
- School or Government policy
- Teachers' own past experience.

Some of these conditions will be more important for you than others, but for every teacher there is one vital condition, the pupils themselves.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PUPILS

When weighing up the conditions affecting discipline, most teachers acknowledge the importance of one particular condition. That is, their knowledge of pupils or indeed the lack of it. Knowledge of your pupils may consist of knowledge of their negative qualities, for example, their potential for disruption. It could also be about their potential as achievers and the positive personal qualities they exhibit. In our discussions with teachers many referred to this knowledge of pupils and of the class as having a strong influence on their actions to promote effective discipline, as the following examples make clear.

Examples of knowledge about pupils influencing actions

"I just told them where to go and get the materials because they're still not familiar with where everything is kept."

"I've got to keep an eye on Robert and Paul. They now sit on either side of me at the table ...because if I don't do that they will do nothing."

"I had to speak to Susan, let her know I noticed she was back from holiday — but I didn't want to make too much of it, after all, the others in the class could be jealous. Not all of them have parents who could afford a holiday."

A good deal of information about pupils comes from your contact with them and from their last teacher. However, you may be seeing only part of their personality. Parents have information that can be useful. At parents' evenings do you make the most of opportunities to find out more about pupils' home life, feelings about your lessons and family attitudes to school? Where does most of your information about pupils come from? How accurate and reliable is it? Do you know?

INCREASING YOUR AWARENESS OF THE CONDITIONS

The most important condition affecting teachers' actions in the classroom is the knowledge they have about their pupils. Acquiring this knowledge and responding to it gives confidence to your actions.

Knowing about the conditions which influence your actions, and responding to them, is more productive than searching for the 'perfect' conditions in which to promote effective discipline.

CONDITIONS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

1 Think about the group of pupils you described earlier, the group you like teaching. What are, for you, the most important influences on your planning for this group? For example:

- ☐ the topic - you feel confident, know what the salient issues are
- ☐ the pupils - you know their interests, abilities, aptitudes
- ☐ the time of day you have most contact - you work with them before they or you get frazzled
- ☐ the availability of a good range of materials
- ☐ your mood - you feel relaxed, at ease, knowing you will enjoy working with the group and convey this expectation to them.
- ☐ other things? .....

2 Now think about a group you find troublesome. Use the same checklist of influences. Where are the major differences? Do these provide starting points for change?

	Yes	No
Confidence in the topic	☐	☐
Knowledge of the pupils	☐	☐
A good time of day	☐	☐
The availability of good materials	☐	☐
Your mood is positive	☐	☐
Other things?	☐	☐

Are there any differences in the conditions influencing the good group and the troublesome group? If your answer is NO then, maybe for you, the difference between good and troublesome groups lies in the goals you set. See the next Chapter for ways of analysing this.

If your answer is YES, there are differences in conditions, then these differences could be your starting point for change.

Which conditions are different? Can you improve on conditions for the troublesome group by:

- getting to know their personal interests and good points
- planning a new routine of activities for the pupils in the group
- rearranging groups
- other changes?

If you cannot change conditions, then maybe you should redefine your goals for the troublesome group; see Chapter 5.

5

DECIDING ON GOALS

In the previous chapters we have talked about the ways in which your actions and the conditions in the classroom affect discipline. We have suggested that you need to recognise these conditions, face them and consider them. We believe that actions need to fit the conditions. But why choose a particular action? Actions aimed at promoting effective discipline have not only to match the conditions but they need to fit in with what you as a teacher are trying to do with a specific pupil or class. Your actions will be influenced not only by conditions but also by your teaching and discipline goals.

GOALS

Teachers have goals for the whole class and goals for individual pupils. A goal for a class might be to complete a section of their workbook: a goal for a pupil might be to get him or her to answer a question asked in class. Teachers usually have more than one goal for each activity, or piece of work.

Goals directly influence actions even though you might not be aware of them. For example, an infant teacher had a goal of motivating pupils and giving them responsibility by allowing them a 'choose time' every day. She said of one morning's work:

> *"It was obviously going to take then well into break to finish everything, but today I did want them all to finish their story — so I had to chop one or two activities off the list to give them their choose time too."*

The goal of finishing a specific piece of work was important, as was keeping to work routines, but it was also important that the infants were able to exercise choice and take responsibility for a part of their day.

Teachers try to cover several goals in their teaching, and often at the same time, as the quotation below shows:

> *"Why was it important to get them to talk about (a local news item)? Well, when they talk about it they're all working together, everybody gets a chance to add a little bit. And then, news time gives them a chance to get something off their chests if they need to, about anything at home. We're very aware of adverse social conditions here ... but there's local news too if it's too private. ... Plus, it settles them, news time."*

Many experienced teachers do not have explicit goals written out in the form of a lesson plan. Their experience and familiarity with a syllabus often makes this unnecessary. Yet they have goals of several kinds and these influence the way they act in classrooms.

ANALYSING YOUR GOALS

Look back to your list of actions you drew up on Chapter 3. These focused on the group you enjoyed teaching. Jot down answers to the following questions:

- ☐ What would you say your main goals were for the group? eg — to get through a piece of work — to produce something — to encourage pupils to enjoy learning — to avoid disruption — to give pupils confidence in their abilities
- ☐ Can you identify certain actions as relevant for certain goals?
- ☐ Do you think your goals were appropriate and relevant given your knowledge of the pupils?

Now do the same exercise for the difficult group. Look at your answers and consider this next set of questions:

- ☐ Do actions and goals conflict for this group?
- ☐ Are goals appropriate given your knowledge of the pupils?
- ☐ What should you change to improve matters. goals. actions or both?

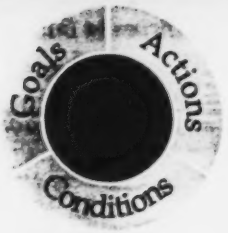
WHEN GOALS CONFLICT

Teachers' goals can sometimes be in conflict. The example below shows how one primary teacher had a problem of goal conflict:

> *"I sat at one of the middle desks so that I could be seen to be working among them. In this school we don't like to sit at our desks much, even when we're correcting. So, I took some exercise books over there and I wanted them to stay in their own seats and finish their work. But when I sit down, it's like an invitation for them to come and show me things. I can't cut them off, because I have to show I'm involved and I do want to encourage them but at the same time I want them to learn to work without constant help. It's getting the balance right!"*

The teacher wanted to praise and help pupils, but she also wanted them to be independent. And maybe she would have liked to do some corrections of work done earlier in the day. As she herself said, it was a question of balance. This small example of everyday classroom reality shows how many influences there are on classroom practice. Heightening awareness of these is a first step towards change and improvement. The interplay of **goals, conditions** and **actions** can be complex. The final chapters of this booklet try to sum up how teachers can use the ideas presented here.

Scenarios 1-5 also give examples of the interplay of goals, conditions and actions. These can be used to stimulate discussion about classroom practice in a non-threatening way.



6

EFFECTIVE LEARNING FROM YOUR ACTIONS

When we act to maintain or promote effective discipline it is the start of a process. The process starts with making decisions about the 'best' thing to do in the circumstances and then choosing an appropriate action from our repertoire. Decisions about how to respond on a matter of discipline are taken tentatively. Not that we act in a tentative way when implementing decisions but in the sense that we remain open to whether our actions have had the desired effect.

If we are going to learn from our actions on discipline, we have to review the outcomes of those actions and be prepared to learn from our mistakes and successes.

When you act to promote effective discipline, there will be intended and expected outcomes from your action. You raise your voice — the class quietens. Equally there will be unexpected and unintended outcomes. You shout at the class — they shout back. Unexpected outcomes should not always be written off as actions which fail, they are the basis for taking new actions. Similarly, you can expect a class to be difficult and it turns out to be good. Everyone recognises the buzz from a really good learning activity but few people analyse why things go well.

UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

Understanding what helps to make classroom discipline effective begins by becoming more aware of your actions in the classroom and how they interact with the general context in which you work. This booklet offers you a framework which will help you develop this awareness. Its aim is to help you understand the complex realities of classroom life by offering a way of looking afresh at what happens. Three key elements have been highlighted:

- teachers' actions — distinguishing between proactive and reactive
- the classroom context — stressing the importance of teachers' knowledge about their pupils
- teachers' goals — suggesting that goals need to be appropriate.

The interplay of goals, conditions and actions is complex and this complexity often hinders awareness of how they influence events. *Scenarios 1–3* aim to show the importance of each of these elements and *Scenario 5* gives one example of a way in which they affect each other. *Scenario 4* shows how outcomes from an incident can be a useful focal point for analysing practice. Using the scenarios, therefore, is one way of raising awareness about actions, goals, conditions and outcomes and their influence on each other. However, the scenarios focus on other people. Analysing your own practice is never easy and yet this needs to be done if you are to heighten awareness of your own skills and knowledge. This booklet has suggested various activities for analysing your own practice, contrasting good and troublesome pupils. If this proves impossible, are there other ways?

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

There are many other ways of analysing classrooms. Our approach is based on the need to understand the elements of actions, goals and conditions in whichever methods you use. You might for example:

- ***Review the outcomes of your actions in the classroom***

  This is an important way to learn from your actions. Unintended and unexpected outcomes are particularly helpful in thinking about adapting existing approaches to discipline and developing new strategies. In this context, unintended and unexpected outcomes are not 'failures' and unexpected successes are important too.

- ***Ask for feedback from colleagues***

  Asking a friend/colleague to observe you in action is never easy. Try getting your colleague to frame the feedback in terms of actions, outcomes, conditions and goals. This helps you set out what you are trying to do and allows your colleague to give more structured feedback. You could do the same — observe a colleague in action. Working with a trusted and respected colleague in this way pays dividends for both parties.

- ***Tape-record one lesson***

  Listen to your tone of voice, the amount of time you spend talking, pupil reactions and so on. This will help give you critical distance on your actions to review them alongside your goals and the classroom context.

IN CONCLUSION

This booklet concerns what you can do to help build effective discipline in your classroom. The approach is based on the belief that teachers can improve discipline in their own classrooms through their own actions. The only limitations are that you have to want to do it; that you are aware of the practical steps that you can take to make your actions effective; and that you have realistic expectations of what can be achieved.

What we offer are ways of assessing how you might blend your own ingredients — your skills and experience, your pupils and your school — into your own recipe for effective discipline. Analysing your actions, goals conditions and outcomes for at least one group of pupils will help you do just that.

7

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The main text gave ideas for dealing with: actions (on page 5); conditions (on page 8); and goals (on page 10). The outcomes of your actions are affected by conditions and by goals. To improve these outcomes you have to look at all three elements together. The connections between actions, conditions and goals determine effective discipline outcomes.

This page suggests a basic exercise to carry out as often as you can, in order to strengthen your awareness and your skills. Think about a group of pupils that you enjoy teaching and which works well. Think back to your most recent lesson with that group.

Actions
What did you do?
before the lesson
during the lesson
Any action to change conditions?
Any action which changed goals?
Any condition which suggested an action?
Any goal which suggested an action?
Conditions
What was the context?
Goals
What were your aims or hopes?
Any condition which altered your goals?
Any goal which made you alter the conditions?

If the overall outcome of that particular activity was successful:

- — did one of the three elements contribute most to that success?
- — did the success arise out of changes you made to any of the three or to lack of change?
- — can you identify positive connections applicable to other groups of pupils?

If it was not successful:

- — did one of the three elements undermine possible success?
- — did the outcome arise out of changes you made to any of the three – or to lack of change?
- — can you identify negative connections, and would it be possible to change any of the elements to make outcomes more positive?

Do you feel confident enough to discuss your reflections with a friendly colleague who will try the exercise too? Talking together will help.

'If we didn't have the teacher we'd be all jumbled up.'

'The teacher brightens the classroom and she gives us good work.'

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EA

ACTION ON DISCIPLINE

SCENARIOS

n the Primary Classroom

Goals Actions Outcomes Conditions

USING THE SCENARIOS

This part of the support pack consists of five classroom scenarios. Each scenario illustrates some discipline issue(s), together with questions which ask you to evaluate the events described and comment on what you might do in a similar situation.

There are no right answers to the scenarios— different individuals and groups will find their own answers or alternative ideas. Scenarios can be used with the resource booklet *Action on Discipline: In the Primary Classroom.*

Each scenario gives you the opportunity to:

- analyse and review a situation involving discipline and classroom management
- evaluate your own ideas about effective discipline in classroom situations
- become familiar with the discipline ideas offered in the classroom booklet.

You can develop the scenarios by:

- changing the characters involved, both pupils and teachers
- changing the situations to focus on what is most relevant to you
- changing the questions to direct attention to what you see as important issues.

Extending and changing the scenarios can be a good way of stimulating group discussion.

You can extend the ideas by:

- using them to start a discussion with colleagues who are more (or less) experienced
- using them to discuss common (or different) approaches with colleagues teaching in different styles
- using them to help students or beginning teachers to explore their ideas.

The scenarios are most effective when used in discussion groups. Groups of between three and six are ideal for promoting debate.

ARTISTRY IN ACTION

As usual Mrs Weston's class race back into the classroom after break. Unusually, Mrs Weston is not there to greet them as it is hall project day. The class quickly collect their resource material in cardboard boxes and head off for the school entrance hall. As they pass the staffroom Mrs Weston emerges holding a roll of netting.

The project gets under way

Mrs Weston: OK! Everyone ready? We all know what we are doing today. Karen, Paul, you're going to arrange the netting with your group.

The class split into their work groups for the project. Mrs Weston moves round encouraging each group and answering questions. The atmosphere is relaxed and productive.

Gary: (In a booming voice) Miss, there is an elephant on the back of this box.

Work stops suddenly and members of the class turn to face Gary and let out a communal sigh. Mrs Weston glances across at Gary then moves away to talk to another group.

Ten minutes later

Anita: Miss, I've finished and I've nothing to do.

Mrs Weston: OK! Anita, I'll have a look in a moment.

Anita: Can I go to the toilet, Miss?

Mrs Weston leaves the pupil she is with and walks over to Anita.

Mrs Weston: That is very good indeed, Anita. Have you done this kind of work before?

Anita: Yes, Miss.

Mrs Weston: It's very good. Now I have a job for you ... (Mrs Weston explains.)

Anita runs off to the classroom and returns with a large pirate hat on her head. Everyone laughs. Anita is soon busy painting the hat.

Changing the activity

Mrs Weston: Right, boys and girls, we have fifteen minutes left before the rest of the school come through here on the way to lunch. Make sure each group collects all its materials together, then we can take the boxes back to our classroom. If you have to go to the toilet, Anita, go now.

Anita: It's all right, Miss.

Mrs Weston: Group Two, you seem close to finishing your bit of the model. We'll need to think about what still needs to be done to the whole display. Before we come back tomorrow we can have a think about that.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1 As a method of avoiding disruption, Mrs Weston uses a proactive approach, particularly the use of established routines. What are they?

2 What are the pros and cons of ignoring Gary's comment?

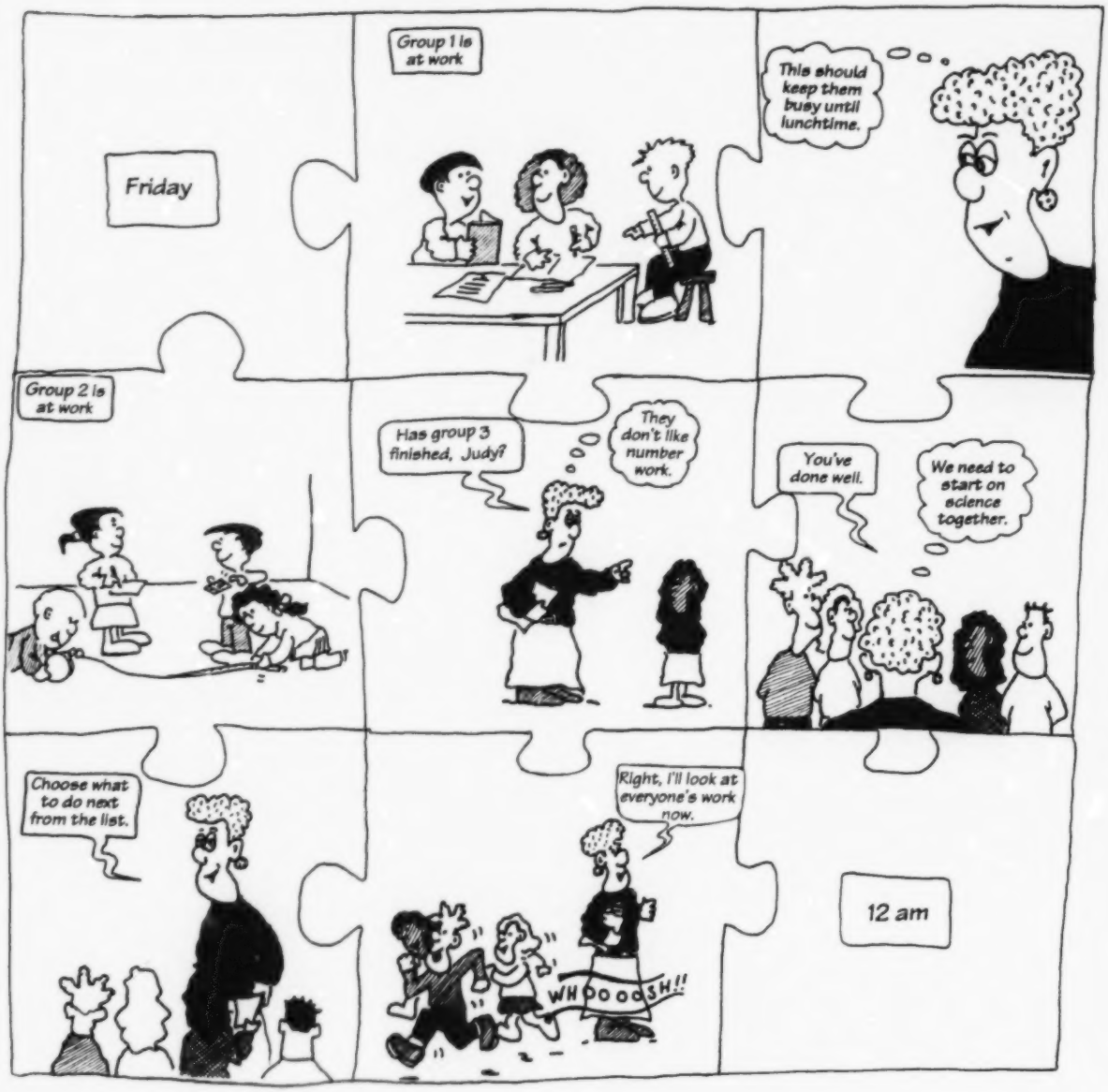
3 One of Mrs Weston's rules is that you go to the toilet *before* class. Why do you think she chose *not* to make this rule clear to Anita?

4 Which of Mrs Weston's class management strategies do you think contribute most to her reputation amongst pupils as being 'a very good teacher who gets us to work'?

5 Do your pupils recognise and understand the patterns of behaviour you expect in class? How do you make these expectations explicit?

6 Do you know *exactly* what you are going to do in the classroom? How easy is it for you to cope with changes or breaks in routine?

PERFECT TIMING...


Friday
Group 1 is at work
This should keep them busy until lunchtime.
Group 2 is at work
Has group 3 finished, Judy?
They don't like number work.
You've done well.
We need to start on science together.
Choose what to do next from the list.
Right, I'll look at everyone's work now.
WHOOOOSH!!
12 am

DISCUSSION POINTS

1 The time is one condition affecting the class. What other conditions seemed to influence the teacher's actions?

2 The teacher had to make several decisions based on conditions and on the goals she had in mind. Should she have offered a reward to the groups who had not finished?

3 Can you predict successes? How do you build on them without discouraging other pupils?

4 How do you build up your knowledge of your pupils? How does this affect your actions and goals?

GRAPPLING WITH GOALS

Ms Blake's composite class has come together very well in the first months of the new school year. The infants have been quick to learn about the class routines and particularly how to share and collaborate. They are in mixed groups and have worked well with the slightly older children.

The new boy

Alan, a new pupil, joins the class in the middle of the term. Alan's mum is anxious about his change of school but is reassured by Ms Blake. 'Don't worry about him, he'll be fine — off you go Alan, join in with any group you like.' Alan joins a group, his mother leaves and the class carries on working.

Ms Blake reacts

Ms Blake: What's wrong over here? Lindon will you tell me?

Lindon: It's Alan, he says that he's going to take our fire engine home after we finish making it.

Ms Blake: What are the rules about sharing, Kim, can you tell us?

The group listen to Kim explain then they carry on with making the fire engine.

Ms Blake: Alan, you come and join Susan's group over here. You know Susan, don't you?

Later that morning

Ms Blake: Alan, Susan, why are you shouting?

Susan: Alan took my book and he tore a page.

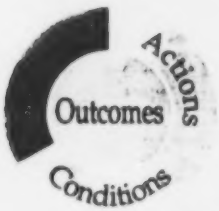
Alan: You said we should share and she wouldn't give it to me.

Ms Blake: Susan, go and get a tissue. Alan, come here and sit beside me. Now everyone, let's get on with our work.

Ms Blake tries to reassure Alan that no-one is angry, but the class have rules about working together and sharing. Out of the corner of her eye she sees two pupils fighting over a ruler.

Ms Blake: Right, you two, stop right there. Leave that ruler on the desk. Jenny, go and sit by yourself in the story corner and finish your writing there. Ben, you go back to your table. Now both of you get on with your work.

Ben and Jenny seem particularly upset by this reaction.



DISCUSSION POINTS

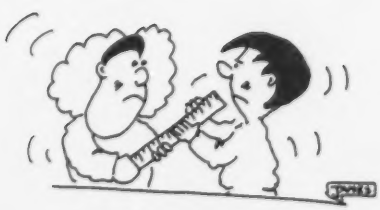
1 Ms Blake has a number of goals for her pupils. What are these goals and how has she prioritised them?

2 Alan's arrival caused a change in classroom conditions. How might Ms Blake have changed her goals to take account of this? Is it better to change goals or conditions? Or both? What conditions could Ms Blake have changed?

3 How do you think Susan feels about the way Ms Blake has prioritised her goals?

4 How far can you go when trying to balance conflicting goals? What do you see as the main problems?

5 How aware are your pupils of your major goals for them? How can you tell?



S^4

SCENARIO 4
in the Primary Classroom

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Helen, stop kicking Adam's chair!
Should I move her?
Helen's always been a handful. She's a bit of a loner.
Later, Helen's in another group
Helen, give Steven back his pen!
Helen, go and sit next to my desk!
Come back early and tidy the boxes.
Before afternoon school
That's good work, Helen. Pity about this morning.
BLUSH!
Miss, can I help you every lunchtime?
Well, maybe on Thursdays...
How's Helen these days?
She has her moments, but she's OK.
Miss, Helen Smith hit me!
...teacher's pet.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1 In this scenario the teacher reacts to the situations which develop around Helen but there are unexpected outcomes and hidden outcomes. Could the teacher have anticipated these? How/why not?

2 In real classroom situations, the teacher's actions will have spin-offs and ripple effects on the class. How do you go about reviewing the range of outcomes that may stem from your actions?

3 When the outcomes of actions in class are uncertain, do you accept the uncertainty and press on? What affects your decision?

IT'S NOT FAIR!

Simon is always talking out. Mr Brown thinks that he and his friends Wesley and Steve encourage others into bad behaviour. Today, as usual, Simon is talking while the rest of the class are working quietly.

Mr Brown: Simon, what are you going on about?

Simon: Nothing, Mr Brown.

Mr Brown: Nothing is precisely what I want to hear from you.

As Mr Brown turns away Simon makes a face at Wesley to the amusement of the whole class.

The class quietens

Mr Brown: Now on you go everyone. The work list is on the board. I want to set up the science table for after break.

Steve: Mr Brown, I can't do this sum, I haven't done maths worksheet 3, I was off last week.

Mr Brown: We did it yesterday, just think for a moment.

Mr Brown moves away and continues with his preparations for the science activity. The noise level in class begins to rise.

Mr Brown: Right, I'm thinking I may have to keep you all in at break if that's the best you can do.

Simon: (Mumbles something to laughter from Wesley and Steve.)

Mr Brown: What did you say, Simon?

Simon: Nothing.

Mr Brown: Come with me (they go outside).

Mr Brown and Simon return to the classroom. Simon sits alongside Mr Brown's desk.

Mr Brown: Right, everyone, get ready for break, put your worksheets in your trays.

The bell goes

Mr Brown: Steve, Simon and Wesley, wait behind. Remember to come back promptly, the rest of you. We have a lot to do on the science project.

Steve: It's not fair, you said everyone had to stay in and you've let them out.

Mr Brown: Simon, I think you said a rude word when I said the class might have to stay in.

Simon: No, I didn't.

Wesley: He only said Boo!

Mr Brown: (quite angry) That's not what I heard. Well Simon, I'm waiting for an apology. Come on, I haven't got time for this nonsense from you.

Simon becomes very upset and runs out of the class.

Steve: It's not fair!

DISCUSSION POINTS

1 Mr Brown's previous knowledge of the boys influenced his actions. What other conditions affected his actions?

2 Mr Brown had a number of teaching goals that morning. How had he prioritised them? Could he have changed his priorities? How?

3 There might be unexpected or hidden outcomes from Mr Brown's actions. How could he anticipate them? Is there anything he could do?

4 In the staffroom later, Mr Brown describes his exchange with Simon as a mistake but does not know what else he could have done. Maybe he could have changed events that morning, but where should he have started—with goals, actions or conditions?

5 Think about the interaction of goals, actions, conditions and outcomes in your classroom situations:

— How do you deal with goal conflict — are some goals more important than others?

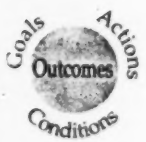
— Everybody acts before they think at times — are your actions routine? Is this good or bad?

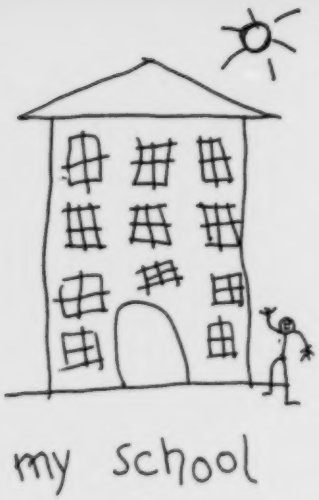
— How do you think about conditions? Are you taking conditions for granted — and is this good or bad?

— Are outcomes in your classes more or less as you want them? Why is this – can you list the reasons?

— If you wanted to change your classroom practice, where would you start? Actions? Goals? Conditions?

MAKING LINKS

Scenarios		Action on Discipline: In the Primary Classroom
Scenario 1		**Chapter 3** Planning learning activities carefully Making connections with previous work Developing class routines Positive relationships with pupils Knowledge of pupils
Scenario 2		**Chapter 4** Knowledge of pupils and the class Time of the week/day Class size Beliefs about children and pupils
Scenario 3		**Chapter 5** Identifying teaching and behavioural goals Selecting appropriate goals for different pupils Balancing conflicting goals
Scenario 4		**Chapter 6** Learning from unexpected outcomes Monitoring outcomes Getting feedback on your teaching Relating outcomes to actions, conditions and goals
Scenario 5		**Chapters 6 and 7** Interrelating actions, conditions, goals and outcomes



ACTION ON DISCIPLINE

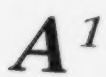
Throughout the Primary School

Pamela Munn
Margaret Johnstone
Gordon Watson
Lynne Edwards

HOW TO USE THE DISCIPLINE PACK

This booklet is part of a pack which aims to support schools' work in the important area of discipline. The pack contains two booklets. One (this booklet) concentrates on whole school discipline. The other (*Action on Discipline: In the Primary Classroom)* focuses on discipline in the classroom. These booklets draw on key findings from SCRE research on discipline — research on the day-to-day realities of school life, to help schools improve discipline. The focus is on understanding what makes for effective discipline.

There are three symbols used to identify the three different kinds of support material for the booklets.



Action on Policy Papers: There are five of these. They suggest practical tasks which can help improve discipline. They emphasise the need to go beyond paper policy to active commitment and implementation of agreed changes in discipline practice.
They can be used to:

- help the school analyse its current discipline message
- involve the whole school community in improving discipline.

Information Sheets: There are three of these at the back of this booklet. They list some discipline resource packs for schools and offer a brief description of them. They also list some major books and articles on discipline.

Scenarios: There are five of these. They present descriptions of every-day classroom events. They are intended as a stimulus for discussion about teachers' classroom practice and about whole school discipline. No right answers are given. Teachers can use these scenarios to:

- consider their own ideas about what makes for effective discipline
- analyse the connections between discipline in their classrooms, subject departments and the school as a whole.

ACTION ON DISCIPLINE

Throughout the Primary School

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THE RESEARCH

The ideas and information in this support pack are based on the findings of research into discipline in Scottish schools carried out over a three-year period by the Scottish Council for Research in Education. The research reports are listed on page 18 of this booklet.

The examples and quotations used in the text are from real schools and teachers. Any names used are fictitious.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1

GETTING STARTED

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet focuses on discipline in the whole school. It uses findings from SCRE research to pin-point the key factors contributing to effective discipline. It concentrates on routine discipline and does not deal with extreme pupil misbehaviour or on pupils with records of need in terms of social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. A separate publication is necessary to tackle this adequately.

The booklet does not offer *the* correct recipe for effective discipline. If such a recipe existed it would have been discovered by now! It offers a means of looking at the school in the way an outsider would, to analyse the discipline message. Instead of taking things for granted about the way the school operates, it suggests you try to look at it as a stranger. This is intended as a way of identifying the key ingredients of good discipline which can be assembled in the combination most appropriate to your school.

WHY bother? Taking a fresh look at the school can:

- help you understand what works and why it works
- help the school adapt to changing circumstances by understanding why something works
- identify areas for improvement and development.

STRUCTURE

The booklet is in five main chapters of which this is the first. Chapter 2 highlights the importance of discipline to overall school effectiveness and stresses that schools can make a difference to the way pupils behave. Chapter 3 identifies key elements in a school's ethos which contribute towards discipline policy — elements which the school may not be aware of in the hurly burly of everyday school life. Chapter 4 looks at ways of analysing the discipline message the school is giving out and identifying strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 5 outlines ways of changing the discipline message.

SHARING THE BOOKLET

This booklet can be used with different groups for different purposes. For example:

- *the senior management team* to review discipline policy in general in the whole school
- *teaching staff* to consider the match and mismatch among rules, sanctions and rewards at different ages and stages
- *teaching staff and/or senior management* to review communication with parents about pupil discipline and to share ideas.

The booklet can be used on its own or with other support material in the pack to raise awareness about key influences on discipline and as a starting point for review and development. Each school will have its own starting point for such a review. Some will want to focus on rules, sanctions and rewards; others on home–school relationships; others again will prefer to flick through the booklet before identifying particular starting points. Whatever the starting point, our intention is that this booklet and the associated materials provide useful advice and support. The real work in improving discipline will be done by teachers, parents and pupils working together.

2

WHY BE CONCERNED ABOUT DISCIPLINE?

Good discipline is a vital part of school life. It is one of the elements which make up a school's ethos — that intangible combination of elements which give each school its unique character and atmosphere.

Research on discipline in the primary school found that:

- teachers dealt most frequently with low-level indiscipline such as pupils talking out of turn, or hindering other pupils, or just getting out of seats without permission
- violence against teachers was rare
- pupil physical aggression towards other pupils was quite frequent; seven out of 10 teachers reported dealing with this during a typical week
- the vast majority of primary teachers encountered pupils who showed a lack of concern for others, by their inconsiderate behaviour around the school
- the vast majority of primary teachers had to deal with cheeky or impertinent remarks and persistent infringement of school rules.

The picture painted by the survey revealed some differences among schools. Understandably, teachers can point to economic and social difficulties in local communities as having an impact on pupils' behaviour. Yet there are things that schools themselves can do to promote effective discipline. Chapter 3 describes these. However, why *should* schools give discipline priority over all the other demands on them? There are three main reasons, suggested by teachers themselves:

- good discipline helps overall school effectiveness by providing a good learning and teaching environment
- good discipline is central to the organisation of school life
- good discipline is central to children's well-being.

SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

Research on school effectiveness has shown that schools make a difference. Schools with very similar pupils, located in very similar environments differ in their effects on pupils' levels of attainment as measured in public examination results. They also differ on a range of other measures. One explanation for differential effects lies in school ethos. Ethos is hard to define. It is made up of many different elements — staff and pupils' attitudes and expectations are key. There are other elements too and ethos indicators are now available for schools to use to evaluate their climate. Details are in *Information Sheet 3*. This booklet could be used in conjunction with these indicators to review school discipline, an element in school ethos.

MEANS AND ENDS

Discipline is a means to an end. It is necessary if pupils are to learn. Effective discipline is not the same as effective learning. Without effective discipline, however, it is unlikely that pupils will learn much. Effective discipline, as in a well-ordered classroom, is a necessary, but not the only condition for effective learning.

Discipline is also a curricular end in itself, as in, say, learning respect for and toleration of others. It goes beyond what is needed for effective learning in the subject-based curriculum. Its concern is with socialisation and the development of values, beliefs and attitudes. This is an ambitious and difficult job for schools who, of course, cannot undertake it alone. What schools see as acceptable behaviour may not be shared by pupils, parents and some members of the local community. Conflicting views will be hard to reconcile, especially if pupils and parents see no good reason for the school's demands. Trying to reconcile these views might start with explanations from the school and with frank discussions with pupils and parents. For some schools, such a step may be daunting. For others, a start might be made on this demanding road.

PUPILS AND RULES

Discipline is also necessary for pupils' safety and well-being. Schools have a duty of care to the pupils who attend. Rules are necessary so that health and safety risks are minimised. Most pupils will accept rules for which there is a clear rationale and which are seen to be fair. For example, in the SCRE research pupils commented on the need for certain rules, as the following extracts show:

"People would get hurt if you ran in corridors."

"If there was no [litter] rule, our school would be a dump."

"If we talk and carry on we will not know the work we should know."

The research also suggested that pupils saw rules as a necessary evil. Teachers naturally wanted to stop pupils doing what they wanted to do and from messing about. Very few pupils saw any element of personal benefit in keeping to rules, other than getting on with school work. This could be worrying. If pupils do not value school work then rules can seem pointless. How can schools get across the personal and social consequences of rule breaking and open up discussion about the need for rules?

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

There are many other influences on pupils' social development, for instance, parents, friends, community, and the media. Yet the school's role is an important one. It can open up a debate about values. It can systematically and overtly contribute to pupils' personal and social development. It can explicitly and implicitly convey its own value system.

For example, one school in SCRE's research had set out to emphasise that teachers and parents needed to work together for the good of the children. Its school brochure stated:

> *"Discipline is necessary to make our school function smoothly, efficiently and, most important of all, happily. Certain qualities are needed to ensure this happens. These are tolerance, politeness, good manners and respect for others and for their property. ...We ask your cooperation and support in developing these qualities and sustaining our code of discipline and behaviour."*

These were not just ideas on paper. This school had a thriving parents' association and parents were involved in many aspects of school life. They were used to helping out in school and familiar with the school buildings and the staff. Teachers saw themselves as part of a town where 'everybody knew everybody'. There was a feeling of all working together. When a pupil misbehaved, staff were keen to discuss the reasons with parents and to work out, collaboratively, a course of action. As one teacher put it:

> *"This is a close community. I live here. ...I've never had anything but support from parents."*

Not all schools are so fortunate, of course. Nevertheless, parental support was the result of deliberate efforts by the school to work with parents. This important element in school life is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

SUMMARY

Some key points about the importance of discipline are:

- effective discipline can have a positive influence on teacher and pupil morale, making school an interesting and enjoyable place to be
- effective discipline contributes to school effectiveness in general
- effective discipline is an important pre-condition for pupils' levels of attainment
- effective discipline is part of the personal and social development of pupils
- effective discipline is necessary for pupils' safety and well-being.

If the school already has effective discipline, understanding why this is so will help ensure it stays that way. It will also help the school cope with changes such as different pupil intakes, new management systems or curriculum development.

If the school feels its discipline could be improved, this booklet offers a way of looking afresh at what is happening. Before change and improvement can take place, the school needs to understand the main influences on its current policy.

3

ANALYSING THE DISCIPLINE MESSAGE: KEY INFLUENCES ON DISCIPLINE

Each school has its unique culture, history and environment. What is seen as effective discipline in one school may not be appropriate in another. In deciding what kinds of effective discipline to aim for, schools have first to analyse their discipline message. What are the signals they are giving, intentionally and maybe unintentionally, to pupils and their parents? What kinds of discipline are staff promoting? Are all staff promoting the same general standards?

This Chapter lists key influences on discipline. It also gives examples of messages about discipline being transmitted by some schools.

SCRE's in-depth study of a small number of primary schools showed that each school had its own idea of what effective discipline was. What the schools had in common were three key influences on effective discipline:

- expectations about the pupils
- staff relationships, including the special role of the headteacher
- the extent and nature of parental involvement.

These were fundamental to the way in which teachers applied rules, sanctions and rewards. They also affected how pupils responded.

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT PUPILS

All teachers have expectations about the way pupils will behave and what they will achieve. There is a body of research showing that these expectations have a strong influence on the way teachers act towards pupils. Pupils are also adept at picking up teachers' expectations about them. These expectations influence how pupils respond to teachers. A key ingredient of good discipline is positive pupil–teacher relationships.

Two teachers sum up the expectations most staff in their school have of the pupils, that is that they often lacked basic social skills, confidence and self-esteem. The school was in an area of multiple deprivation and teachers were aware of the disadvantaged backgrounds of many children:

> *"The children are lacking in confidence and we have to try to build up their confidence. ... They are very easily put down so you have to be careful not to squash them flat."*

> *"It is important to build up a good relationship with the children so that they can approach us for help with their problems. The children in this particular area require a great deal of affection and attention as this is often lacking at home."*

In this school expectations about pupils influenced whole school policy in the following ways:

- rules were expressed positively, as in *Be polite*, rather than negatively, as in *Do not run in corridors*, thereby conveying an expectation that pupils would behave well;
- the rationale for rules was spelt out. It was not taken for granted that pupils would understand why rules were needed;
- when rules were broken it was made clear to pupils that it was their *behaviour* that was being rejected but that they were still valued as people;
- in short, the school tried to establish a secure and caring environment.

This meant that there had to be some sensitivity in interpreting and applying rules. For example, late-coming to school tended to be a problem with a substantial majority of pupils. Another teacher at the same school explains the school's response:

> *"We have times when there is a lot of late-coming in the mornings. Because some of the parents are not working, there is no reason to get up, so everyone sleeps in. A lot of children get themselves up. Now, there's no point in getting on to the children. We would rather they appeared."*

The school felt, nevertheless, that prompt action had to be taken to prevent disruption to the pupils' learning. The lateness rule was for parents as much as pupils. When pupils were frequently late, parents were invited to come to school to discuss the issue and to plan out a way of ensuring children arrived on time. Teachers tried to demonstrate to pupils that 'home rules' such as sleeping late and unpunctuality were not universal rules. They consistently set out an alternative code and tried to take parents along with them. *Action on Policy 1* and *5* suggest involving a range of people, including parents, in developing the school's discipline policy.

STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

Teaching staff sustain the school's discipline message by what they say and do. They can actively promote discipline by:

- accepting responsibility for pupil behaviour outside as well as inside the classroom
- accepting responsibility for all pupils, not just those in 'my class'
- sharing problems and successful strategies for dealing with them
- having common standards of discipline.

The headteacher has a very important role in promoting discipline and in promoting positive staff relationships. The headteachers in the research schools were highly visible, sometimes looking in, informally, in a class, sometimes teaching. In one school where the headteacher was new, she had established a habit of team teaching with each of her colleagues. This helped her get to know staff and pupils and it emphasised to the pupils that all the teachers had the same broad standards. In

small schools, where heads often have responsibility for a class, it can be difficult to be seen around the school and share in teaching. This can sometimes be managed by the careful use of peripatetic staff.

The support of headteachers was warmly welcomed by staff. It served to affirm good discipline. The following quotations from teachers in two different schools show how valued this kind of support is:

> *"Even before 'official' support is required, Mr Jones (the headteacher) can help. If he is in the teaching area and hears me going on at someone he might come in and say 'Oh! is he being a pest?' It immediately shows authority and that he's there to support me."*

> *"Mrs Brown (the headteacher) does back you all the way, she's very good. It's not something you do constantly, sending pupils to her door, but you know the support is there."*

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

A key point is the balance in teachers' time and effort devoted to preventing discipline problems arising as opposed to dealing with incidents of indiscipline. The classroom booklet deals with this issue in classroom teaching. It stresses that it is better to try and prevent disruption occurring through planning and preparation than to spend inordinate amounts of time dealing with bad behaviour. This is important at school level too. For example, one headteacher in the SCRE research had set up a small project to involve parents in working in the school. His reasoning was that:

> *"Parents felt up till then that they couldn't come and discuss anything with the headteacher and they came along very sheepishly. They were astonished that we would actually listen to them: they didn't realise that it was so easy to speak to folk at school — and it made a big difference to the attitudes of parents towards teachers..."*

In this headteacher's school, parents and teachers seemed to have negative stereotypes of each other. Teachers saw parents as aggressive and out of tune with school values; parents saw the school as authoritarian. The headteacher felt that getting teachers and parents together would give both a better sense of perspective. This in turn would lead to accord over the school's positive and caring discipline message. *Action on Policy 3* outlines a practical activity for staff to analyse the messages about the discipline they are conveying. *Action on Policy 2* gives ideas about getting the discipline message to parents.

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT PARENTS

Parents now have new roles as customers and managers of schools. They can exercise influence through parental choice of school and through parental voice in school boards and governing bodies. The vast majority of parents are interested in their children's education. They want their children to do well. They want their children to have a happy and enjoyable time at school.

Parents and teachers are the key partners in children's education. To translate that rhetoric into reality, however, schools need to ask themselves some searching questions about their expectations of parental involvement. The fundamental question is: *does our school really want to work with parents?* All too often parents who challenge the school's way of doing things are typified as problems. One headteacher who showed great sensitivity towards parents in difficulty or seen as socially inadequate took a far harsher view of parents who queried their child's education. As she said:

> *"It's the parents from [district] who are the worst problem, they have all sorts of ideas about what we should be doing."*

It is difficult to imagine a successful partnership between school and the parents in these circumstances, yet the school will expect parents to support the teachers. Schools need to ask themselves what kinds of messages about parental involvement they are transmitting to those parents who do contact them. Chapter 4 gives more details.

Infant teachers in the SCRE research frequently remarked that parents had significant knowledge about their children which they were eager to pass on. Such knowledge included the child's likes and dislikes, home circumstances and special events such as birthdays or outings. Yet these informal contacts gradually disappear as children progress through primary. Are there ways in which schools can build on the informal and often very positive contacts with parents in the early years?

What about the parent that schools seldom or never see? A familiar comment at parents' evenings is, 'You never see the parents you want to'. Teachers who make this kind of comment should ask themselves if they would turn up (perhaps rearranging shifts) to stand in a queue and then be publicly humiliated about their children's lack of effort, interest or bad behaviour. This may be a parody of parents' evenings in your school. All too often, however, parents' evenings mean long queues for three or four minutes conversation with a teacher, conversation which can be overheard by others.

Parents need to feel genuinely welcome. Their views and comments need to be valued, not dismissed out of hand. *Action on Policy 2* and *5* give some ideas about involving parents.

SUMMARY

In this Chapter three key influences on a school's discipline message have been highlighted:

- expectations about pupils
- staff relationships
- expectations about parents.

They operate subtly and can be difficult to detect simply because they are part of the fabric of school life. They are part of what pupils, teachers and parents take for granted about the school.

To change school discipline means looking at how these influences operate. This involves the school taking a fresh look at itself. This is easier when there is a new headteacher or other senior member of staff. However, it is possible for established staff to stand back and look clearly at what is routine and taken for granted. Newcomers are often sensitive to a school's atmosphere and might be turned to for information. However, learning to review normal practice by looking at underlying influences and attitudes is a valuable skill for any teacher. *Action on Policy* papers give ideas about how to take a new look at the school and about who might be involved in the process.

TRANSMITTING THE DISCIPLINE MESSAGE

A school transmits its discipline message in two ways:

- on paper
- by the actions of staff.

Both are important. This Chapter identifies the main ways in which the discipline message is transmitted. It offers suggestions for checking that the message which is being transmitted is the one intended.

SCHOOL RULES

Rules lie at the heart of a school's discipline message. The rules on paper are often the introduction for pupils, parents and staff to what the school considers important. The checklist below offers ideas for checking that the message being transmitted by your school's rules is both positive an relevant.

Rules checklist

- ✓ Are the rules framed positively? Rules such as *Be polite* or *Arrive on time* convey expectations of good behaviour. A list of 'don'ts' set up expectations of confrontation and trouble.
- ✓ Are all the rules essential? Could you justify every one? Having too many rules devalues their significance.
- ✓ Is the rationale for rules made explicit? People are more likely to stick to rules if they know why they are necessary.
- ✓ Have the rules been decided by the school as a community? If pupils, parents and staff are involved in setting rules and reviewing them, it increases the likelihood of their being followed. It also signals a group responsibility for discipline rather than an us and them approach.
- ✓ Are the rules on paper really those which matter in practice? A study of the punishment record book will tell you.

Rules need to be reviewed regularly if they are to be owned by pupils and staff.

SANCTIONS AND REWARDS

Schools have sanctions which come into play if rules are broken. Few schools have rewards for obeying rules. Research shows that teachers are very sparing in their use of praise and other rewards. What would be the pros and cons of recognising the good behaviour of individual pupils and classes? For example, rewards such as a special day out for the best behaved class could help improve class discipline. They might also foster unhealthy rivalry among classes and have a detrimental effect on the whole school.

What do rewards convey:

- that some pupils are better than others?
- that good behaviour is noticed, welcomed and recognised?

Some schools have experimented with rewards which recognise good behaviour by giving the pupils increased responsibility. For example, one school had a day devoted to charities' activities where pupils were free to choose both the charity to support and the kind of activity to raise funds. It is difficult to develop rewards which are fair and yet do not identify individuals or groups as better than others. Fairness is important to pupils where rewards are concerned.

Pupils also respond to sanctions which are fair. The punishment should fit the crime. However, what the school defines as an offence may have complex roots in the school's discipline history. This history is not always apparent or understood by pupils. The punishment may then seem an unfair over-reaction unless it is accompanied by an explanation. Similarly, where 'crimes' have accumulated, the seriousness of this needs to be explained to the pupil concerned. Purposeful activity, withdrawal of privileges and contact with parents are usually more effective than punishment exercises such as copying from a text.

What do the sanctions used in your school convey? Are they intended to minimise disruption to school work by removing the offending pupil from the main areas of the school? Are they intended to let everyone know that a pupil has misbehaved? Do they punish teachers by involving them in laborious record keeping?

Talking to staff and pupils about the message being transmitted by school sanctions can generate new ideas and perhaps increase the effectiveness of some sanctions. Below are some ideas for checking the message being transmitted by sanctions.

What message is transmitted by your sanctions?

- ☐ Is there a hierarchy of sanctions? If there is a hierarchy, how has it been established? Is the school clearly communicating that some offences are more serious than others? It is important that the punishment is seen to fit the crime.
- ☐ Is there a standard use of sanctions across the school? If not, pupils may feel unfairly treated. Establishing common standards needs the active involvement of all teachers; otherwise teachers may feel restricted and not apply sanctions consistently.
- ☐ How important is the freedom of teachers to develop and implement sanctions? Schools need to balance teachers' individual levels of tolerance and whole school rules and sanctions. What sanctions are applied outside the classroom and by whom?
- ☐ At what stage do senior staff become involved in punishments? Involvement at an early stage signals a concern about discipline in general. Involvement only when serious offences have been committed signals that an offence is indeed serious. What is appropriate for your school?

THE SCHOOL BROCHURE

The school brochure goes to pupils, parents and staff. It will convey an image of the school in what it says and in the way it says it. Those responsible for writing the brochure will be able to read it easily and understand its message. Others may have problems and extract messages which were not intended. For example, compare the tone, language and discipline message of the following two extracts:

> *"We welcome visits by parents. We are pleased to discuss the work of the school and the children's work and progress with you at any time, but if parents wish to discuss matters in detail, it is preferable that they make an appointment. The time between 3.30 pm and 4.00 pm is most suitable for meeting with teaching staff."*

> *"Parents are invited to visit the school towards the end of November to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. The meeting is always, I regret, rather short and may not afford sufficient time to obtain answers to all their queries. Should this be the case, I suggest they arrange a further meeting for a later date."*

Overall, the first extract conveys a positive message that parents are welcome, both to ask about the school itself and their own child. The second conveys the message that the school is in charge and that parents are passive partners in the home-school relationship. These may or may not be the intended messages. The point is that texts convey all kinds of messages. They also make assumptions about their readers. Try asking parents and staff what they think about the brochure. Below are some questions to ask.

The language of the school brochure

- ☐ How many simple, short sentences does it contain?
- ☐ How many complex sentences with more than one subordinate clause are there?
- ☐ How much educational jargon can you spot? eg differentiation, continuous assessment, learning outcomes, opportunities for progression
- ☐ Is good discipline spelt out — or is it assumed to be the absence of indiscipline?
- ☐ Are there any drawings, photographs or illustrations?
- ☐ In short, is it written in an easy-to-read style?

POLICY AND PRACTICE

A clear statement of rules, sanctions and rewards and an attractive brochure are important ways of transmitting the discipline message. They are only part of the story.

All staff are important transmitters of discipline standards. Their actions, words and behaviour in the classroom and around the school convey a message too. For example, a teacher who ignores indiscipline in corridors and in the playground is

conveying a very powerful message about lack of interest and concern for pupils outside the classroom. Conversely, staff who regard discipline outside their classroom as being as important as discipline within it are conveying an important message too. Where staff have special status in regard to discipline, their actions are especially important. This means that the senior staff team are key.

Chapter 3 identified key influences on discipline; expectations about pupils, parents and teacher relationships were stressed. These are part of the context which helps to set standards.

Changing the school's discipline message means understanding how these ingredients affect discipline. Without this understanding, changing the policy on paper will be ineffective. Chapter 5 suggests ways in which a school could change its discipline message.

SUMMARY

This Chapter has stressed that schools transmit their discipline message in two ways, on paper and by the actions of staff. The most important message on paper is the one transmitted by school rules. A rules checklist is given on p12; involving pupils in deciding about the key rules is also suggested. All schools have sanctions which come into play if rules are broken but few schools have rewards for good behaviour. The chapter identified questions about fairness and appropriateness for schools to consider and suggested that schools could consider a wider use of praise or rewards.

The school can convey unintended messages about itself by the way it communicates with parents and others. Analysing the school brochure is one way of alerting staff to the kind of image being transmitted; analysing typical home–school communications is another.

Teachers' actions, words and behaviour send important signals about discipline. They speak louder than any rules, sanctions or rewards about what discipline standards really are. Any changes in paper policy, rules, sanctions or rewards will be meaningless unless staff believe in them and act on them.

5

CHANGING THE DISCIPLINE MESSAGE

Studies into what makes for successful change in schools show that the need for change has to be recognised and supported by the school as a whole. No organisation, particularly one as complex as a school, can change its culture, policy and practice overnight. Change takes time. If the commitment is there, it can happen. To be successful change has to be owned by the whole school community.

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Changing a school's discipline message is a complex task involving teachers, pupils and parents. In such a fundamental aspect of school life, the leadership of the headteacher is essential. In the SCRE research, teachers in a school that had turned its discipline round were unanimous in pointing to the key role of the headteacher. Typical comments were:

> *"I feel that we're back to talking about personalities, but since Mr Green [the new head] has taken over the atmosphere in the school — staff-wise — is very good and it's spread to the classroom too. We went from a strict, impersonal tone [ ] to a friendly, relaxed atmosphere."*
>
> *"The pupils are not in fear and trembling of [HT and AHT] but they respect them and certainly the new head is well-liked by the school."*
>
> *"The headteacher is so important, the children need to feel there's a strong hand at the head of the school."*

However, the headteacher alone cannot change things. The commitment and enthusiasm of others needs to be generated and harnessed productively. A team approach is the goal.

GETTING COMMITMENT

There are many competing demands on time. It is important, therefore, to see improving discipline *not* as another demand but as something which underpins all the things which a school does. It is not an optional extra. A school which has effective discipline is more able to deal with:

- curriculum change
- changes in assessment
- competition from other schools.

Curriculum provision and assessment practice in themselves send powerful signals to pupils about how they are valued by the school. Research has demonstrated, for example, how setting and streaming can promote anti-school sub-cultures among pupils who are in bottom groups by labelling them as less able, or not valued. Providing appropriate work for pupils with different abilities is difficult. It might also

lead to pupils seeing themselves as more valued or less valued because of the curriculum offered to them.

A school with effective discipline will be attractive to parents. This booklet began by stressing that discipline was a means to an end — academic success for pupils. It is also an end in itself — the personal and social development of pupils. Schools which demonstrate their interest in and commitment to pupils' personal and social development as well as to their academic attainments, are likely to find favour with parents. Studies of parental choice of school show children's safety, well-being and happiness to be important factors.

STARTING POINTS FOR WORKING WITH STAFF, PUPILS AND PARENTS

- ***Building discipline into the development plan***

  One way of structuring a review of discipline policy and practice is to build this into the school development plan. A school might decide to analyse communications with parents, for instance, or the kinds of offences which teachers most commonly deal with. This would reveal any mismatch between intention and practice. New targets could be set; for example, to increase the number of positive communications with parents.

- ***Involving pupils***

  A group of pupils might be asked to write their version of the school brochure. Infants could draw a guide to discipline for the next year's new intake. This would identify the important rules, sanctions and rewards for existing pupils.

- ***Involving the school board***

  Governing bodies or school boards could help develop the school brochure. This kind of task might lead to a discussion of rules, sanctions and rewards, and be a step towards involving parents more actively in discipline matters.

- ***Different starting points***

  Every school will have its own starting point because every school is different. The *Action on Policy* papers give some ideas. Whatever starting point is chosen, the headteacher has a vital role to play. Getting commitment, supporting initiatives from staff, pupils and parents and keeping the momentum going, have been suggested as key goals for headteachers.

TO SUM UP

School discipline is influenced by:

- teachers' expectations of pupils
- staff relationships and, in particular, the role of the headteacher
- teachers' expectations about parents.

The strongest of these influences is the teachers' expectations about pupils. Accordingly, this could be the starting point for analysing a school's discipline message.

STARTING TO ANALYSE THE DISCIPLINE MESSAGE

One way to begin would be by involving the staff in looking at rules and sanctions in terms of the kind of expectations being transmitted. For example some messages to pupils and to staff are:

- pupils are going to cause trouble — so let us spell out what they can and cannot do and who is in control
- pupils need to feel welcome and valued — so we will have a few rules and signal everyone's involvement in keeping a friendly, productive atmosphere
- pupils know how to behave — we do not need to spell it out.

These are just a few examples of messages that can be conveyed through rules and sanctions in the school. The next stage would be to discuss with staff whether the message being conveyed was the one intended. If it was, then was it a useful message? If it was not, a starting point for change has been identified. How to change, in what direction and who to involve are all decisions for individual schools. The *Action on Policy* papers give ideas and each school will come up with its own blend of ingredients to suit its own circumstances. A checklist to analyse the discipline message and to plan developments might help.

Discipline message checklist: some examples from different schools

Message conveyed	*Message Intended?*	*Message evident in practice?*	*Ideas/plans*
• Pupils valued as responsible members of the school community.	√	Not entirely – no pupil involvement in discussion about key rules. Rationale for rules not explained.	Raise the possibility of a relationship theme for next term with staff. Fit in with developments in combating bullying.
• Senior staff actively involved in all levels of school discipline.	√	Yes – regularly seen around the school and visited all classrooms. Analysis of diary (*Action on Policy 3*) supports this message.	No new action. Praise staff at next meeting for open door policy.
• School expects pupils to be unprepared for school discipline.	?	?	?

A school could develop its own checklist, filling in the messages being conveyed, their accuracy and effectiveness.

Changing the school rules and sanctions is relatively easy. It is also ineffective unless schools understand *why* they operate in the way they do. This means that the school has to examine what it necessarily has to take for granted in its day-to-day operations. This demands time and effort but it is worth it. Schooling affects the life chances of all young people. Effective discipline is one way of maximising these life chances.

PUBLICATIONS

The research on which this pack is based is reported in the following publications.

JOHNSTONE M and MUNN P (1992) *Discipline in Scottish Secondary Schools*, available from SCRE, 15 St John Street, Edinburgh, Scotland. Price £6.50.

MUNN P and JOHNSTONE M (1992) *Discipline in Scottish Schools* Interchange Number 6, available free from SOED Dissemination Officer, SCRE, 15 St John Street, Edinburgh Scotland.

MUNN P, JOHNSTONE M and CHALMERS V (1992) *Effective Discipline in Secondary Schools and Classrooms*, London: Paul Chapman. Available from Paul Chapman or bookshops. Price £12.95.

MUNN P, JOHNSTONE M and CHALMERS V (1992) *Effective Discipline in Primary Schools and Classrooms*. London: Paul Chapman. Available from Paul Chapman or bookshops. Price £12.95.

Resource materials: summary

This is a summary list of some of the main resource materials relevant to discipline. Fuller details of these materials are on Information Sheet 2. Contact your teachers' centre or advisory service for information about local availability of these materials.

Titles:	*Building a Better Behaved School*	*GTC probationer materials*	*Manage-ment of Pupil Behaviour*	*The Positive Teaching Package*	*Promoting Positive Behaviour*	*Skills for the Primary School Child*	*Working Together: Parents and Teachers*
Pack contains:							
Units	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Notes/manual	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Handouts		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Suitable for:							
The whole school	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classroom management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Personal and social development						✓	
Involving parents	✓					✓	✓
Training in use of materials needed or advised			✓			✓	✓

Resource materials: details

The materials listed can be developed to suit your own school's needs. They need not necessarily be used as an entire programme. Most give advice on alternative ways of using the material. They may provide a springboard for your own ideas for staff development. A number of them are expensive and it would be advisable to find out how these packs have been used in other schools in your region. Price bands listed are: A (over £50), B (£10-£50), C (under £10).

BUILDING A BETTER BEHAVED SCHOOL: A Development Manual for Primary Schools (1993). Price band B.

Peter Galvin, Sue Mercer and Peter Costa

Harlow: Longman

Contact Point: Customer Service, Longman House, Burntmill, Harlow, Essex CM20 2JE.

This manual offers material to help schools develop a Positive School Discipline Plan. Contents include an *Introduction to the materials* with *Notes for guidance* for workshop leaders and INSET co-ordinators, nine units and OHP masters. Units offer a focus on the management of low level, habitual disruption in the school; group/class and among individual pupils. Each unit supplies workshop materials. Units include:

- notes for using the unit
- background text
- OHP sheets
- activities and a sample outline for a training day or half day.

GTC SCOTLAND PROBATIONER MATERIALS

Contact Point: GTC Scotland, 5 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5AF.

A package of materials is offered to improve the quality of the two year probationary period served by Scottish teachers.

Two videos have been produced to date:

Probation on the Inside (1991) (Price band B): comes with OHPs and discussion sheets.
Starting to Teach (1991) (Price band B): for headteachers and describes a probation induction scheme in a Scottish secondary school.

Written materials include:

The Management of Probation — based on interviews with young Scots teachers.
A Headteachers Package — offers advice on the probationary period.
Welcome to Teaching: For First Year Probationer Teachers — pack of training units available to all new teachers in either the nursery/primary or secondary version.
Support Materials for Probationer Teachers — available to headteachers to enable them to provide appropriate staff development for beginning teachers.

MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL BEHAVIOUR: Teaching Today (1991). Video pack: price band B; Booklet: price band C.

London: BBC Education

Contact Point: (Video pack) BBC Educational Developments, PO Box 50, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7EZ. (Booklet) Broadcasting Support Services, PO Box 7, London W3 6XJ.

This comprises a video pack and booklet. Circle Work activities are demonstrated. Whole-school policy and classroom management issues are raised. Expert help may be needed to train teachers in Circle Work techniques.

THE POSITIVE TEACHING PACKAGE (1991). Price band A.

Kevin Wheldall and Frank Merrett

The Centre for Child Study, University of Birmingham

Contact Point: Positive Products, PO Box 45, Cheltenham, Gloucester GL52 3BX.

The Positive Teaching Package is produced by the same authors of BATPACK and BATSAC. It is a skills-based course of five units designed to be taught in 1¼ hour sessions.

The pack includes:

- a general instruction manual
- a scripted teaching manual
- a training video of classroom sequences
- OHP masters
- a copy of *Positive Teaching in the Primary School*
- a starter pack of course unit notes to train a group of up to 15 teachers (supplementary packs are available) and additional books.

Tutor training is not required but schools may wish to contact their region to see if trained tutors are available.

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR: In the Primary School (1992). Price band A.

A McLean

Strathclyde Regional Council Psychological Service, Dunbarton Division.

Contact Point: Sales and Publications, Faculty of Education, Strathclyde University, Jordanhill Campus, Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP.

PPB is a programme which can form part of whole school staff and an individual teacher development. The course consists of 12 units, which include guides for group leaders to each unit, activity and information papers. Each unit also offers follow up ideas. There is an accompanying training video and a background reading booklet. The group leader may be a member of the school staff. PPB will interest teachers who believe that their behaviour has a large influence on their pupils' behaviour and that positive group management skills can be described, practised and acquired.

SKILLS FOR THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD: Promoting the Protection of Children (1990). Price band B.

TACADE in liaison with RE-SOLV

Contact Point: TACADE, 1 Hulme Place, The Crescent, Salford, Manchester M5 4QA.

SPSC is a child protection programme which should be part of a personal and social education programme. SPSC includes a manual, schools' workshops, parents' workshops and lesson cards. TACADE recommend that teachers who intend teaching SPSC should undertake some training.

WORKING TOGETHER: Parents and Teachers (1993). Price band C.

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum: Committee on School and Community

Contact Point: SCCC, Information and Marketing Services, Gardyne Road, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD5 1NY.

This pack offers ideas for ways in which parents and teachers working together can aim for a partnership in supporting children's learning. Initially, school staff could use the pack to reflect upon the school's current practice before they engage in workshop sessions with parents. There are four sessions which can help schools work towards a development plan which will promote a more effective home/school partnership.

Reviews

If you are interested in reading more, the following materials contain information which could be a useful starting point to a wide and complex literature about whole-school and classroom approaches to discipline.

Reviews

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (1989). *Discipline in Schools: Report of the Committee of Enquiry chaired by Lord Elton.* London: HMSO.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (1987). *Good Behaviour and Discipline in School. Education Observed* 5. Publication Despatch Centre, Canons Park, Honeypot Lane, Stanemore. (Contains an appendix listing survey reports by HMI from 1977 onwards which make significant reference to behaviour and discipline).

DOCKING, J W (1987). *Control and Discipline in Schools: Perspectives and Approaches.* London: Harper and Row.

GRAHAM, J (1988). *Schools, Disruptive Behaviour and Delinquency. Home Office Research Study 96.* London: HMSO.

JOHNSTONE, M and MUNN, P (1987). *Discipline in School: A Review of 'Causes' and 'Cures'.* Edinburgh: SCRE.

Useful overviews

RICHARDS, L (Ed) (1989). *The Best of SET: Discipline.* New Zealand Council for Education Research and the Australian Council for Educational Research. (A pack of 15 articles on various discipline issues).

WOLFENDALE, S and BRYANS, T (1989). *Managing Behaviour: A Practical framework for schools.* NARE Publications Stafford. (The National Association for Remedial Education. Central Office, 2 Litchfield Road, Stafford, ST17 4JX.This booklet could be used as a stimulus and framework for action on managing behaviour. References and a list of INSET materials are provided).

School ethos

Discipline is an important element of school ethos. Key government publications already in schools in Scotland are:

SCOTTISH OFFICE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (1991). Management of Educational Resources 5, *The Role of School Development Plans in Managing School Effectiveness.* Edinburgh: HMSO.

SCOTTISH OFFICE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (1992). *Using Ethos Indicators in Secondary School Self-Evaluation: Taking Account of the Views of Pupils, Parents and Teachers.* School Development Planning Support Materials. Edinburgh: HMSO.

SCOTTISH OFFICE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (1992). *Using Ethos Indicators in Primary School Self-Evaluation: Taking Account of the Views of Pupils, Parents and Teachers.* School Development Planning Support Materials. Edinburgh: HMSO.

SCOTTISH OFFICE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (1993). *Taking Account of the Views of Parents, Pupils and Teachers in School Self-Evaluation.* Glasgow: Quality in Education Centre, Faculty of Education, Strathclyde University.

Key publications from the Department of Education and Science (now Department for Education) are:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (1989). HARGREAVES D H *et al. Planning for School Development: Advice to Governors, Headteachers and Teachers.* London: DES publications.

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ACTION ON POLICY 1
in the Primary School

Pupils and the Discipline Message

The starting point for improving discipline is to **analyse the discipline message** the school is already transmitting. Once a school begins to investigate this it can see the extent of match and mismatch between what is intended and what really happens. The pupils themselves will have views about the discipline message. Asking them about this will help uncover the reality of discipline for pupils. Before investigating the pupils' views it is important to think through three aspects of any analysis:

- **how** is it to be done
- **what** the focus will be
- the **purpose** of the analysis — how it will feed into the review of discipline policy.

Idea: Ask pupils what they think about school discipline

• How could this be done?

- get a group of pupils to write about it
- ask a group of pupils to develop a questionnaire to be completed by the older pupils in the school
- make discussion of school discipline part of the social education programme
- use drawings and discussion with younger pupils to see what they think

Think about who will analyse the results and write up a brief report before starting out. Could such an exercise be part of a practical investigation for the pupils?

• What could the focus be?

Pupils could be asked to:

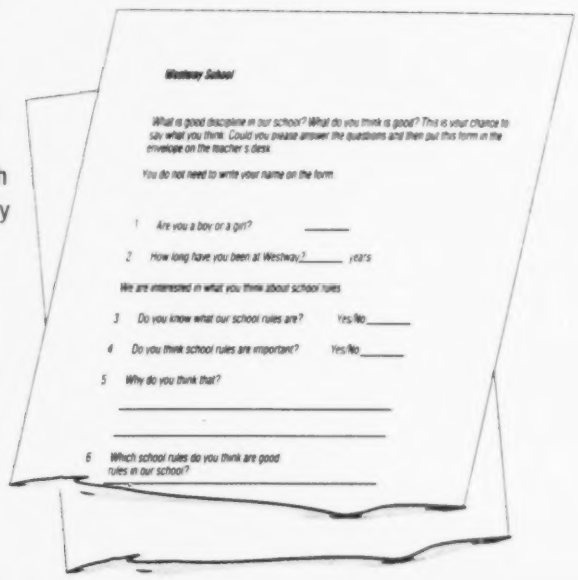
- identify what for them important school rules should be
- explain why they think these rules are important
- identify effective strategies for dealing with rule breakers.

• What is the purpose?

Involving pupils in this way signals that:

- the staff are interested in their views
- pupils are seen as active members of the school community

It also sets up expectations of change for both pupils and staff. This may worry staff unless they are consulted and involved.


Westway School
What is good discipline in our school? What do you think is good? This is your chance to say what you think. Could you please answer the questions and then put this form in the envelope on the teacher's desk.
You do not need to write your name on the form.
1 Are you a boy or a girl? _____
2 How long have you been at Westway? _____ years
We are interested in what you think about school rules.
3 Do you know what our school rules are? Yes/No _____
4 Do you think school rules are important? Yes/No _____
5 Why do you think that?
6 Which school rules do you think are good rules in our school?

Parents and the Discipline Message

Schools cannot work in isolation. They need the help and support of parents if discipline is to be effective. Schools can see parents as junior and passive partners, perhaps only to be involved when pupils are causing problems. Two ideas are suggested for **exploring expectations about parental involvement**. They are starting points. Schools too will have their own ideas. As in *Action on Policy 1*, it is important to think through three aspects of any analysis:

- **how** is it to be done
- **what** the focus will be
- the **purpose** of the analysis — how it will feed into the review of discipline policy.

Idea 1: Investigate an aspect of home–school relations

• How could this be done?

– analyse typical communications between home and school over, say, a term.

• What is the focus of analysis?

– the content of communications
– the style of communication
– the tone of communication.

Remember to consider too, what sorts of communications parents offer about their children.

Under *content*, identify the main topics of typical communications. Are they, for instance:

– praise for the pupil, or school achievements?
– complaints about individual pupil's behaviour and attitude?
– requests for active involvement in various aspects of school life?
– factual information about the school, for example holidays, subject choices, staff complement?

Where pupil behaviour is the topic, is it taken for granted that parents share the school expectations?

Under *style*, ask, for example:

– is the design of texts attractive — well spaced, good size of print, not too cramped?
– are sentences short and straightforward? What are you assuming about parents' knowledge and familiarity with school procedures?
– are texts available in languages other than English?

Under *tone*, ask:

– is the tone friendly, welcoming, distant, cool?
– is the language free of jargon?
– is the message one that parents are junior partners expected to support the school's way of doing things?

See overleaf ▶

• What is the purpose?

Analysing home–school communication by asking the kinds of questions suggested, will give you a flavour of the kinds of expectations being transmitted in print. If your intention is to promote parents as partners in their children's schooling, answering these questions will indicate the kind of partnership being transmitted. You can then judge whether this is the intended message.

Idea 2: Evaluate parents' evenings

The printed word is only one means of communication. Personal contact is important too. One important opportunity for home–school contact is parents' evenings. Evaluating these could identify strengths of current arrangements and areas for improvement.

• How could this be done?

- design a simple evaluation form
- ask parents attending an evening to complete it and hand it in before they leave
- have clearly displayed boxes for returned forms and some staff primed to encourage parents to complete and return forms.

• What should be the focus of the evaluation?

Think about including questions on:

- administrative arrangements
- time available to talk to staff
- privacy
- quality of information exchanged
- purpose of parents' evenings.

• What is the purpose?

Such an exercise signals an intention to take parents' views seriously, recognising their important role in their children's education. It will also provide a source of ideas for ways of improving parents' evenings. Action needs to be taken and be seen to be taken after such an evaluation — otherwise it will be seen as no more than a public relations exercise.

Who to involve?

Who to involve in these various tasks — collecting pupils' views, analysing home-school communication, and evaluating parents' evenings — needs careful thought. *Action on Policy 5* gives some suggestions. School board members, governors and members of the parent–teacher association could be involved, for instance, in helping design the evaluation of parents' evenings and/or in analysing home–school communications.

Management Style

All staff have responsibilities for sustaining good discipline. However, the **actions of the headteacher and of senior colleagues** are especially important. The activity suggested below is designed to help these staff analyse the messages about discipline they are wittingly or unwittingly transmitting. This can be done as an individual exercise or as a group activity.

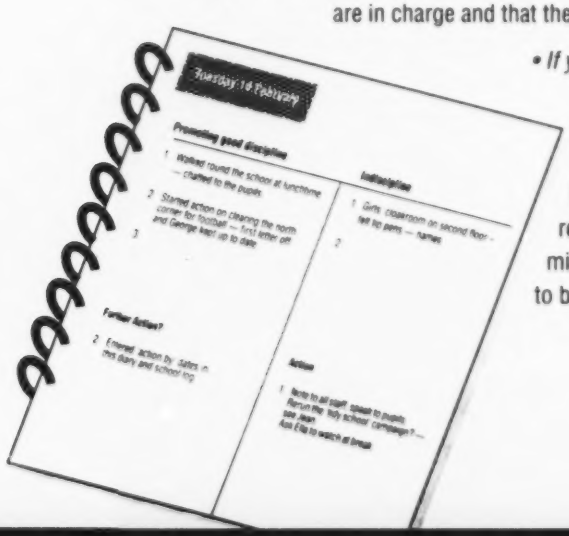
Idea: Keep a diary for one week of involvement in discipline matters

Design the diary so that at the end of the week you will be able to answer the following questions:

- *How many activities to promote good discipline were you involved in?*
For example, being seen around potential trouble spots; involved in curriculum development.
- *How often were you involved in dealing with indiscipline:*
a) in the classroom b) around the school?
- *Is the balance between actively promoting good discipline and dealing with indiscipline about right as far as you are concerned?*
- *Have the outcomes of your involvement in dealing with indiscipline been fed back:*
a) to the class teacher b) to other staff concerned?
- *Are there patterns to your involvement in dealing with indiscipline in terms of:*
a) kinds of offences b) pupil age groups
- *Looking back over the week as a whole, what kind of message does your diary tell you that you have been transmitting?*

For example:

- that you are more concerned with dealing with indiscipline than promoting good discipline?
- that you are likely to be involved only in serious incidents?
- that a disproportionate amount of your time is spent on a small number of pupils?
- that your communication with staff over discipline incidents is poor, implying that you are in charge and that the teacher's role is to refer incidents to you?



- *If you have done this as a group, combine the data and look for similiarities and differences in experiences. What are these telling the group?*

If your analysis confirms that intention and reality match, all well and good. If there are mismatches, how will you change your practice to bring it closer to your intentions?

ACTION ON POLICY 4

in the Primary School

Common Standards

Idea: Set aside some or all of a staff meeting to discuss discipline at different stages in the school

Key questions which could be debated are:

1 Should there be common standards across the school?

• Would you agree that the benefits of common standards are:

- pupils know what is expected?
- teachers feel confident in knowing what is expected?
- teachers will be backed by colleagues if indiscipline occurs?
- teachers feel able to apply common standards outside their own classroom?

• What are the drawbacks of trying to achieve common standards?

- If there are to be common standards, how will these be (a) agreed (b) enforced?

2 Should there be diversity?

• Would you agree that the benefits of independence on standards are:

- it takes account of the needs of individual pupils?
- it strengthens the solidarity of particular stages in the school, such as infants, especially in a large school?
- it emphasises the professional responsibility of individual teachers for discipline?
- it allows staff to work in ways which suit them?

• What are the drawbacks of diversity?

- Are there limits to set?
- Would it encourage division in the school?

3 Schools operate successful discipline policies with different systems. What message about discipline is your system transmitting?

• Is it that:

- discipline is everyone's responsibility?
- indiscipline is indiscipline wherever it happens?
- special circumstances demand special rules?
- pupils need to recognise special circumstances and adapt accordingly?

4 Again, if intention and reality match, all well and good. If there are mismatches how will practice change to bring the two closer together?

Getting Commitment to Change

One way of getting commitment to change is to **involve those most directly affected**. This means valuing all shades of opinion, however antithetical to your own and trying to harness criticism in a way that is constructive and productive. Working with people is the goal. Think about the following if you are contemplating a review and development of school discipline.

1 Who will be involved in the review?

- pupils
- parents
- teachers
- school boards/governing bodies
- parent–teacher associations
- non-teaching staff

2 Are there particular kinds of people to be involved?

- those new to the school: beginning teachers; experienced teachers coming from other schools.
- those who do not share the dominant school values. They can be helpful in sharpening up those values and justifying them. Active involvement may also decrease their disaffection from school.
- those who have special responsibilities for discipline, for example, school board members, governors, senior management, nursery staff.
- those who seem to have particular difficulties in maintaining effective discipline. They can bring an important perspective to the actuality of school life.

3 How are those designated to be involved?

- working groups
- practical tasks and activities (*Action on Policy 1, 2, 3* and *4* give ideas)
- timetabled meetings to carry out agreed tasks.

4 How will the effectiveness of review and development be judged? Consider:

- a clear timetable for review, recommendations and implementation.
- agreeing in advance some criteria of effectiveness, such as a higher profile to promoting good discipline.
- setting targets which are readily identifiable.

5 What should the headteacher's role be?

- to chair the review OR
- to support it but not actively participate OR
- the driving force?

my school

'There's a lot of sharing, we work well as a staff and share a concern for the children.'

'The school's one whole community, you can't lock yourself away and say "this is my class".'

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